

Afghanistan

August 7, 2006

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**Soldiers get a grip on
Combat Hapkido**

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Army Staff Sgt. Leon Le, deployed from the 364th Civil Affairs Brigade in Portland, Ore., carries a bale of tea, part of 10 tons of humanitarian assistance supplies delivered to the Shutol District Center in the Panjshir Province July 23.

Photo by Air Force Capt. Joe Campbell



Cover: Grandmaster John Pellegrini, left, demonstrates the proper way to manipulate a pressure point to U.S. and Afghan service members stationed at Forward Operating Base Ghazni.

Photo by Army Sgt. Tim Sander
345th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

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Afghanistan Freedom Watch

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Camp Lacey Soldiers assist injured Afghan child

By Army Spc.

James Tamez

19th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- An 8-year-old Afghan boy injured five years ago is a good candidate to receive a prosthetic eye thanks to medical personnel from the 10th Mountain Division.

Faisal came to the eye clinic at Camp Lacey here for his first examination on July 30. He was injured during an attack on Taliban positions near Kabul in 2001. As a result, Faisal lost the use of his left eye.

"After the accident, I told the doctors to give [Faisal] my eye, but the local doctors said that it couldn't be done," said Faisal's father, Mohammad Shapoor Qaumi. "Now my son is very happy because American medical personnel will be helping him."

The treatment Faisal receives

over several months will result in the child being able to live a normal life. "He is only a child and should be able to play and have fun with other children," Qaumi said. "Children at school are mocking him, and he is hurt because of it."

Through friends, Qaumi said he heard about some of the good things American medical personnel have been doing, including providing prosthetics for some Afghan citizens.

One of the military's primary missions here is to provide quality medical care, and the Afghan people are very appreciative for it, said Army Capt. Eric Guzman, chief of optometry, 10th Mountain Division.

"As a doctor, and seeing kids are suffering, you can feel helpless," Guzman said. "We get great satisfaction knowing we can help."

Faisal was given a series of



Photo by Army Spc. James Tamez

Army Capt. Eric Guzman discusses medical options with Faisal and his father Mohammad Shapoor Qaumi.

eye examinations to determine if he could have a prosthetic eye. The tests on his right eye determined Faisal would need glasses, which medical personnel provided later that morning.

Further testing showed Faisal needed surgery on his left eye before the prosthetic could be

put in place, said Guzman. He will receive that operation in about two weeks. Then, sometime over the following months, he should receive the implant.

He would be the 10th Afghan citizen, and second child, to receive a prosthetic eye from the eye clinic on Camp Lacey.

Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week



Afghan cultural tidbit

Photo by Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Heath Harwood

Is it safe here?

Dari

Ainja masoon ast?
(In-hamaf-soozast?)

Pashtu

Dalta aman dae?
(Del-ta a-man da?)

Afghans are typically farmers, growing wheat, barley, corn and rice as major crops for internal consumption. Orchards are also highly prized and produce fruits and nuts for export.

JLC hosts Afghan National Army logistics partners

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Mike Rautio

Joint Logistics Command

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Six soldiers from the Afghan National Army's Logistics Command and Ministry of Defense spent two days as part of a "hands on" partnership July 25-26 with service members from the Joint Logistics Command here to observe how U.S. logisticians provide for and manage supplies within the Combined Joint Operations Area.

"Afghanistan will never forget what you are doing for us," said Afghan National Army Col. Jamal Naser, another one of the participants. "We would like to thank the Coalition Forces for coming from far away to stand shoulder to shoulder with the ANA for a free Afghanistan."

While here, the Afghan logisticians got a close up look at U.S. practices and policies. This was part of an ongoing series

of exchanges intended to allow the ANA Soldiers to improve their own operations by giving them a chance to observe U.S. knowledge and practices.

"I think it is good for us because we learn a lot about logistics operations and how the American system works," said Afghan National Army Command Sgt. Maj. Amanzai Ziaul Hag, a participant in the exchange and an ANA Ministry of Defense liaison officer for Coalition Security and Transition Command-Afghanistan.

"What we learn here we will pass on to our officers and NCOs," said Hag. "This will make the ANA stronger because it will increase our knowledge. I am happy that Americans came here to stand with the ANA. They left their families and their country to help the Afghan people and to help the ANA destroy terrorism and create an independent Afghanistan."



Photo by Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael Rautio

Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael Russell leads Afghan National Army Soldiers through a Class I dry storage warehouse here July 25.

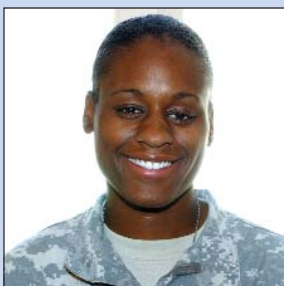
This exchange was a result of building on past sessions, said Army Maj. Dean Janosik, a plans officer in the JLC who is assigned to the 10th Sustainment Brigade Troops Battalion on Fort Drum. "They specifically pointed out things they wanted to see and do, including specific locations

they wanted to go to," said Janosik, a Biloxi, Miss., native. All of the participants involved want to see this relationship continue to flourish.

"I hope we can grow closer in the future," said Naser. "As we learn from you, we will be helping our people and our country."

Enduring Voices

What do you plan to do with the money you have earned while on deployment?



Army Spc. Adrienne Dodson
Bagram Airfield

"Since my husband and I are both here, we plan to renew our vows and buy a house."



Army Spc. Rahaum Skinner
Bagram Airfield

"I plan to pay off all my bills and spoil my kids."



Air Force 1st Lt. Damien Miller
Bagram Airfield

"I plan to pay off school loans and invest in real estate."



Army Master Sgt. Michael Walling
Bagram Airfield

"I plan to pay for home improvements, invest for retirement and take a long vacation."

Extremists attempt to delay Afghan road progress

**By Air Force Capt.
Joe Campbell**
*Panjshir Provincial
Reconstruction Team*

PANJSHIR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Despite the efforts of extremists who destroyed \$200,000 worth of heavy construction equipment earmarked for reconstruction projects, the future for residents here remains bright.

Suspected members of the Taliban hijacked the driver of an 18-wheeler on July 10. He was transporting a bulldozer and front end loader for use on road construction projects throughout the Panjshir Valley. The driver was forced to divert the truckload of equipment off the Herat - Kandahar Road into the desert near the city of Chakau where the cargo was destroyed. Although he feared for his life, the driver escaped unharmed.

"I was stopped by several Taliban members who forced me to drive off the road until I couldn't travel any farther," he said. "Then they fired multiple rockets at the equipment and both machines were completely burned."

The dozer and loader were part of a \$470,000 equipment package funded by the Commander's Emergency Response Program, or CERP, for the Panjshir government's use. Eagle AA Corporation of Kandahar was hired to procure and ship the equipment.

When notified of the equipment destruction, Panjshir Governor Haji Bahlol reflected on his military past and commented on the senseless act of violence.

"When I was a commander with the Mujahideen, we destroyed many military vehi-



Courtesy photo

The extremists destroyed the equipment valued at \$200,000 by firing rocket propelled grenades at it causing it to burn. The equipment was primarily for the provincial government to build and maintain small roads and paths to link villages to the main roads being constructed.

cles but we never destroyed construction equipment," he said. "There is no purpose to that."

The equipment was primarily for the provincial government to build and maintain small roads and paths to link villages to the main roads being constructed. The Taliban destroyed equipment that would have let Afghans build and maintain their own infrastructure.

"I was in the Abdara Valley on Thursday and saw villagers crushing rock with a pick and hauling it by wheel barrel to build a road; their lives would be a lot easier with that bulldozer," said Air Force Lt. Col. Neal Kringel, Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team commander.

The U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID, is funding 47 kilometers of road extending from

the center of the province south to connect the valley to Charikar and Kabul. This segment of the road cost \$16 million and construction began in June 2005. It is scheduled to be completed by the end of December.

Bahlol said the new roads tie in closely to his goals for an improved outlook for Panjshir residents. Education and agriculture are his number one and two priorities respectively and the much improved road helps make each possible.

"Education and agriculture are keys to helping people improve their livelihood," said Bahlol. "The paved road makes it easier for students to get to school and it will open new markets for our agricultural goods."

The director of the Panjshir PRT called the road project the single largest agent of change in Panjshir.

"Economically, local Afghans

are emphatically optimistic about the commercial links this road will provide," said Fletcher Burton. "Politically, it helps demonstrate the Coalition's commitment to reconstruction in Afghanistan. Socially, it helps expose the Panjshir people to other cultures."

The disruption of progress by the extremists will not stop the reconstruction, development and economic growth of the province or improved livelihood of its residents.

"The Coalition and our Afghan partners build and the Taliban destroys," said U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Benjamin Freakley, Combined Joint Task Force 76 commander. "But, we will prevail because the Coalition remains vigilant and committed to its mission of helping the government of Afghanistan rebuild and defeat the insurgency."

Alishang District celebrates opening of Shehanwatah footbridge

By Air Force Cpt.
Gerardo Gonzalez

Mehtar Lam Provincial Reconstruction Team

MEHTAR LAM, Afghanistan -- Residents of Alishang District in Laghman Province can now cross the fast-flowing Alishing River safely thanks to the completion of the Shehanwatah footbridge.

District government and Mehtar Lam Provincial Reconstruction Team officials celebrated the event with a ribbon-cutting ceremony July 12 on the 60-meter bridge next to Shehanwatah village.

"We appreciate the help of the PRT for sponsoring the construction of this bridge," said Alishang District Gov. Mohammad Rahim. "It would have taken us years to build it if we did it on our own."

Rahim said the \$60,000 project is an example of the positive initiatives the government can undertake by reaching out to donors and nongovernmental organizations. But district residents also bear a responsibility.

"We expect the members of this community to look for the security and stability of this area," he said. "Go find the enemies of the government and tell them who built this bridge. The government built it with assistance from the international community."

The government is working to stabilize the country and the province, said Rahim. It is government-led efforts that will bring prosperity to the people. Air Force Lt. Col. Brad Bredenkamp, Mehtar Lam PRT commander, said this specific project was nominated by the former provincial governor because the previ-

ous bridge had become heavily worn and dangerous to cross. More than 5,000 people living in the surrounding villages stand



Photo by Air Force Capt. Gerardo Gonzalez

Alishang District Gov. Mohammad Rahim speaks during the Shehanwatah Footbridge ribbon-cutting ceremony July 12 near Shehanwatah Village, as Air Force Lt. Col. Brad Bredenkamp, Mehtar Lam Provincial Reconstruction Team commander, listens. The \$60,000 Shehanwatah Bridge project was nominated by the former governor of Laghman Province to replace the previous bridge, which had become heavily worn and dangerous to cross.

to benefit from the new structure.

"This bridge will stand for years to come as a symbol of the commitment of the government of Laghman Province and Afghanistan to the people of Alishang District," Bredenkamp said. "Today it stands as a symbol of hope for a better future."

The new bridge also has the potential to spur economic development. "Something as simple as this bridge can increase the access of the people to other villages and other markets," the commander said.

"It can bring economic growth and prosperity."

Economic prosperity, in turn, can bring

better education and access to medicine for village children, so they can grow up safer and happier in a more secure environment, said Bredenkamp.

"This bridge is just one project," he said. "There is more work to be done to further improve Alishang District and Laghman Province."

The government, from Afghan President Hamid Karzai down to the district level, is committed to helping with projects to help improve people's lives, said the commander.

"We are committed to assisting them in any way that we can, as the PRT, in order to improve your district and your lives," Bredenkamp told the villagers during the ceremony.

The PRT has sponsored 30 projects across Laghman Province to date, according to Bredenkamp. Some are complete, some are on-going and others will soon begin.

"These are all symbols that Laghman Province is moving forward," he said.

"This bridge will stand for years to come as a symbol of the commitment of the government of Laghman Province and Afghanistan to the people of Alishang District."

*Air Force Lt. Col. Brad Bredenkamp
Mehtar Lam PRT commander*

Government director speaks on ongoing, upcoming projects

**By Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class
Jamie D. Hamill**
Khost Provincial Reconstruction Team

FORWARD OPERATING BASE CHAPMAN, Afghanistan - The director of Rural and Redevelopment, Mohammad Omar, discussed reconstruction and development issues with international and local media in a press conference here July 15.

More than 75 people from outlying districts attended to hear Omar's speech on the current and future provincial reconstruction projects proposed. Attendees included shura mullahs, village elders and other provincial directors.

Khost Governor Marijadeen Patan, who provided opening comments, said, "It is time for reconstruction and development. A few years ago Khost was simply a district and now we are a province. We now have a working government, where a few years ago there was nothing. We are moving forward and have over 800 reconstruction projects in our Province, some large and some small, but all necessary."

Patan thanked Omar for his hard work and dedication to the people of Khost Province.

Attention shifted to Omar as he began to talk about reconstruction and development concerns. "We have two main focuses: social and economic," said Omar. "The social is the establishment of the Provincial Development Council, where it



Photos by Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Jamie D. Hamill

Mohammad Omar, Director of Rural and Redevelopment, speaks to the media during a recent press conference July 15. More than 75 people from outlining districts attended the press conference about the current and future provincial reconstruction projects proposed.

is their responsibility to nominate and prioritize development projects for the province."

He said the economic aspect focuses on construction contracts impeding a contractor's ability to sub-contract projects out two or three times. "The government has to be responsible to the people. It is the government's responsibility to oversee the development of the province," he said. During his tenure, Omar has overseen numerous National Solidarity Program projects ranging from energy to education to roads. Currently, there are 135 completed irrigation projects within the province providing drinking water to the people.

"Drinking water needs to be considered for the all the people of Khost and not for a selected few," said Omar. "People have been trying to divert drinking water from others to benefit themselves. If we do not do something, we will lose these projects and our children will not be provided healthy drinking water."

Additionally, \$1.3 million is dedicated for road construction, more than government

officials had expected. The roads will provide commercial access to Khost, establishing commerce and extending trade, said Omar, who reaffirmed that it is the responsibility of the government to plan, prioritize and budget the development of the province.

Redevelopment efforts continued to face challenges by ongoing attacks against construction projects and "night letters" placed on doors of contractors and workers who support the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan central government.

"Afghanistan will continue to grow and develop despite the onslaught of criminal actions," said Mohammad Shareef, a development contractor attending the conference. "With aid and support of the international community, the central government of Afghanistan will continue to expand its reach."

As more and more projects are near completion, Khost Province will continue to expand and develop into a focal point of trade and commerce enhancing the quality of life for the citizens of Khost Province.



Khost Governor Marijadeen Patan speaks to the media during a recent press conference. Attendees included shura mullahs, village elders and other provincial directors.



Photo by Army Pfc. Kyle Nelson
Army Spc. Denise Escamilla with the 94th BSB, Echo Company, interacts with three Afghan children.

Task Force Warrior brings r

By Army Capt. Lawrence Sekajipo
2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment

ZABUL PROVINCE, Afghanistan - Coalition and Afghan doctors conducted a three-day village medical outreach operation in July, offering much needed medical aid to various villages in Northern Deh Chopan District, Zabul province.

The medical team treated approximately 450 Afghans in Larzab and 160 in Baylough.

The veterinarian team treated nearly 430 farm animals and distributed de-worming medication to all of them. It has been known that animals in this area are susceptible to worms, which could cause a serious threat if not controlled.

A number of family humanitarian aid packages, toys, shoes and clothing were distributed by a civil affairs team during this VMO. The

humanitarian aid supplies were donated by friends and family members of the Soldiers. Reebok International also donated sneakers to TF Warrior mainly to be distributed to the children of Afghanistan.

The two villages sit in a mountainous and rugged terrain only accessible by foot or helicopter, making it difficult for residents to seek medical assistance.

Local leaders and elders have expressed their medical concerns to government officials, such as Zabul Governor Delbar Arman. With a population of approximately 5,000 and a low number of doctors available, the residents of these two villages hope that VMOs are conducted more frequently.

Currently, the nearest hospital for these residents is approximately 13 hours away in Qalat City, which makes it almost impossible at times to take care of medical emergen-



Photo by Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Heath Harwood

Army Spc. Denise Escamilla with the 94th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, Echo Company, examines an Afghan man complaining of a toothache.



medical aid to Afghan villages

cies.

"The locals seriously need medical care in this area. They trusted and sought our care. We are happy to provide whatever care we can," said Army Capt. Yuri O. Rivera, physician assistant with TF Warrior. "It was a good turnout even though this is a known Taliban sanctuary."

During a local Shura, or village meeting, 75 local village leaders addressed their needs to improve roads, schools and clinics to government officials and Coalition forces present during the mission.

This Shura was hosted by Deh Chopan District Chief Anwar Jan, Afghan National Army Col. Abdul Razak Safi with the 2nd Brigade of the 205th Hero Corps, and TF Warrior Commander Army Lt. Col. Frank Sturek.

To improve the area, ANA soldiers and Creek Company Soldiers are currently working on establish-

ing a forward operating base, which will be used by the ANA to assist Zabul residents.

According to TF Warrior officials, 12 VMOs in seven of the 12 districts have been conducted since March of 2006. Their medical team has treated approximately 3,100 Afghans. Their dental team has treated over 120 patients and conducted 15 tooth extractions. The optometry team has treated 300 patients, and the veterinarian team has treated 3,300 animals.

The 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Warrior, out of Fort Polk, La., together with a medical and veterinary team from the 94th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, Echo Company also out of Fort Polk, conducted the VMO. Security for this operation was provided by the Afghan National Army and Creek Company, TF Warrior combat team.



Photo by Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Heath Harwood

Army Capt. Yuri O. Rivera, physician assistant with the 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, examines an Afghan man complaining of hearing problems.



Army Spc. Melissa Hykes with the 94th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, Echo Company, administers de-worming medication to a sheep brought in by an Afghan man to a village medical outreach operation in Larzab, Deh Chopan District.

Photo by Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Heath Harwood

Pace visits with troops in Afghanistan

Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan

News Release

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Marine Gen. Peter Pace, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, honored the work being done by U.S. Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines in Afghanistan when he visited troops here July 28 with a single message: "thank you."

The U.S. military's senior officer attended a luncheon for about 100 Coalition service members and then addressed several hundred more at a forum in the afternoon.

"Those who planned the attacks on the World Trade Center did so from here," said Pace, as he reinforced the importance of the Coalition's mission in Afghanistan. "We are here, along with NATO forces, to ensure that the Taliban never has control of this country again."

Pace comes to Afghanistan every six months to evaluate progress, check on troops and visit with key local and international leaders.

"Things are getting better here," he said. "There are more jobs, more schools, and more buildings all over Afghanistan."

Pace conducted a question and answer session, elaborating on topics ranging from reconstruction in Afghanistan to



Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Robert R. Ramon

Marine Gen. Peter Pace congratulates Navy Lt. Cdr. Matt Mato for a job well done during his visit here July 28. Pace, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, answered questions and thanked the troops for their service.

improved deployment lengths for all services, such as one-year rotations overseas followed by two years at home.

Command Sergeant Major William Joseph Gainey, Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman, accompanied Pace on the trip to spend time with troops and tell them how thankful he was for their time and sacrifice.

Gainey said the youth of America's

Armed Forces are the catalyst for success of Operation Enduring Freedom, and as the senior enlisted advisor to the Chairman, he felt obligated to ensure each and every enlisted service members was taken care of.

Before departing, Pace told the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines that he personally wanted to say thank you for their selfless service and a job well done.

Key commanders confer with provincial mullahs

By Army Sgt. 1st Class

Michael Pintagro

Task Force Spartan public affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan -- Mullahs who expressed doubts about the guilt of slain insurgents were offered compelling evidence by the Task Force Wolfpack commander during a shura, or village meeting, conducted July 26 at the Khost Civil Military Operations Center.

About 10 mullahs sat in rapt attention, intently scanning documents disseminated by Army Lt. Col. David A. Bushey outlined conclusive evidence of the terrorist affiliations of three mullahs recently killed by Coalition forces in the Bak District of Khost Province in eastern Afghanistan.

As the mullahs looked on, the command-

er presented photographs of weapons, al Qaeda training videos and compact disks. Probably most damning were photographs of slain fighters bearing unmistakable Arabic features in this overwhelmingly Pashtun region.

"We did not want to kill these people," Bushey added. "The Coalition Soldiers fired at them only after they resisted."

After surveying the overwhelming evidence of the insurgents' guilt, mullahs pledged to share their observations with the communities they serve.

The shura provided a forum for open discussion of provincial issues by key Coalition leaders and some of Khost's most prominent religious figures. The shura promoted effective communication and mutual understanding among Khost

religious leaders and Americans serving in Afghanistan.

Seated alongside Navy Cmdr. John F. Wade, the commander of the Khost Provincial Reconstruction Team, and an interpreter, Bushey began the shura by welcoming the mullahs, summarizing the agenda and clarifying Coalition policy toward the religion and culture represented by the mullahs.

"We make three promises to all Afghan citizens," the Plattsburg, N.Y., native told the assembled mullahs. "The Soldiers under our command will respect your religion, they will respect your culture and they will respect your families." Bushey encouraged the mullahs to report any deviation by Coalition Soldiers from this

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standard of conduct. The Wolfpack commander, currently serving in his second tour of Afghanistan since 2002, emphasized the constructive aspects of his mission.

"We didn't come over here to capture and kill people," he said. "We came here to make Afghanistan a true democracy." On the contrary, the commander added, "We want the people fighting against the government of Afghanistan and the Coalition to lay down their arms and resolve the situation peacefully through reconciliation programs such as 'PTS.'"

Bushey described the mullahs as "key communicators to the people of your villages and your communities" and invited the religious leaders to establish open and productive communication links with Coalition leaders.

Wade outlined three main PRT missions: enhancing peace and stability, extending the reach of the Afghan government, and promoting economic projects that help meet the needs of the people of Khost Province.

The commander emphasized

the importance of security to his mission. Safety and stability, he said, enable team members "to come into your communities and help meet the needs of the people." Security and economic development, he added, mutually reinforce each other, yielding increasing benefits.

The mullahs responded favorably to the commanders' messages, thanking them for hosting the event, discussing issues of concern in their communities and expressing interest in regular future meetings.

Mullawi Nasrullah, who presides over a mosque in central Khost, sought to dispel notions "that the mullahs are against the Coalition."

Nasrullah also pledged to dispel misplaced suspicions of Coalition personnel. "We need to talk to all the mullahs in the region, 200 or 300 of them, and tell them the Coalition is here to help build mosques, schools and district centers" and "not to change the society or the religion or the families."

The mullahs also responded favorably to a traditional Afghan lunch served after the discussions. Event organizers provided around 150 prayer rugs for distribution in provin-



Photo by Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael Pintagro

Mullawi Nasrullah, who presides over a mosque in central Khost, confers with Army Lt. Col. David A. Bushey, the Task Force Wolfpack commander, following the mullah shura conducted July 26.

cial communities as parting gifts to the mullahs. The mullahs thanked the commanders and event organizers as they departed with their prayer rugs in apparent good spirits.

According to Shura organizers, the gathering aimed to resolve misunderstandings and pave the way for future cooperation between Coalition personnel and mullahs.

"First and foremost, the shura is about developing the relationship between the Coalition and the mullahs," said Army Capt. Al Tofani, the Task Force Wolfpack effects coordinator and a key event organizer. "We

want to develop a positive relationship that will encourage the mullahs to communicate the truth about the Coalition - why we're here and what we're trying to accomplish - to the people."

"This is the first of several engagements we plan to have with the mullahs of this community," added the Syracuse, N.Y., native. "This is the first event, but it won't be the last." Tofani described the mullahs as a relatively untapped communication resource - one he and colleagues hoped to develop over the next several months.



PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

Polish engineers lay cement as part of a project to widen a taxiway on Bagram Airfield. These engineers are not trained in construction, but are machine operators. They received the task to perform a mission outside their skill-set, and they tackled this operation head-on.

Photo by Polish Army Maj. Jaroslaw Sulikowski
PTF Engineer Construction Officer

If you have high-quality photos of service members supporting the Coalition mission or enjoying well-deserved off-duty time, please e-mail them to freedomwatch@baf.af.mil. Please include full identification and caption information, including who is in the photo and what action is taking place.

Mortuary affairs renders honor to fallen Soldiers

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Dave S. Thompson
345th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

JALALABAD AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- The stirring sounds of "Taps" echo in the background as Soldiers stand at attention rendering honor to their fallen brethren. Six team members grasp the flag-draped casket, pivot around in unison and begin a slow, deliberate march toward the cargo bay of a military airplane.

The harsh reality of death is something all Soldiers must face, the chances of which are multiplied significantly during wartime. Soldiers of Task Force Spartan, fighting terrorists in eastern Afghanistan, have lost their share of warriors; yet, undeterred, they battle on because that's what Soldiers do. For those killed in action, the highest respect and honor is rendered in the handling of their remains.

Mortuary Affairs is tasked with this responsibility. They provide mortuary service for military members in the event of a fatality during wartime. An unenviable task it may seem to some, but, to the troops performing this service, their devotion to duty is beyond reproach.

The three-man team that comprises Mortuary Affairs for Regional Command East are members of the 54th Quartermaster Company from Ft. Lee, Virginia. The 54th is among the most deployed units in the Armed Services, due to their "wartime-only" mission.

"Our job is to take care of the remains of our Soldiers and send them home with dignity and honor," said Army

Sgt. Nathaniel Washington, the leader of the crew. "We also provide mortuary services for enemy fatalities."

Army Pvt. Richard Shatlaw is on his first deployment in the Army. He recently graduated from the seven-week Mortuary Affairs Course where students undergo a rigorous curriculum that includes studies in finger printing, dental examination, anatomy, skeletal dynamics and forensic science.

"I wanted to do something in the field of forensic medicine," said Shatlaw. "It's not for everyone, but I knew I had a niche for it. We are also trained in crime scene investigation, and that keeps things interesting."

While dealing with the deceased, life takes on a whole new meaning. The Soldiers of Mortuary Affairs separate from their work by engaging in relaxing activities when off-duty.

"I unwind by watching movies, reading and talking on the phone with my mother," said Army Spc. Alfred Ashton. "My Mom is a very spiritual lady and she keeps me grounded with her faith, support, and encouragement."

Shatlaw echoed similar sentiments regarding his faith. He explained that he was a minister as a civilian and his beliefs, along with prayer, sustains him when things get overwhelming.

Soldiers and civilians alike applaud great feats of courage and valor on the battlefield. The image of the infantryman charging a hill, guns ablaze, against insurmountable odds, is the image of a hero in our military. But one can only



Photo illustration by Spc. Samuel Hayes

Fallen comrades are typically memorialized by a pair of boots, a rifle, identification tags and a helmet.

imagine the courage it takes to tend to fellow Soldiers after they are cut down in the prime of their lives. For those occasions, the Soldiers of Mortuary Affairs exercise a focus and resolve that cannot be measured in words.

"The most difficult part of what we do is tending to a young Soldier whose life was really just beginning," said Washington. "That's when I really have to focus on the fact that this is my job, and try to separate the emotional part of it. But, we are human, and it gets difficult at times."

For Washington, Ashton and Shatlaw, they are simply doing their job, as unheralded and unglamorous as it may be. They are members of one of the most respected and time-honored professions in the U.S. Army. They are rewarded in the knowledge that they play a significant role in honoring fallen heroes by sending their remains home with the highest degree of respect, honor, and dignity.

For those who are charged with returning these fallen heroes back home, a collective salute is due.

Water plant planned for 2007 opening

**By Army Sgt. 1st Class
Michael Rautio**

Joint Logistics Command

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Construction for a new water bottling plant began here July 23rd, promising jobs and opportunity for the people of

this area and the whole of Afghanistan.

"Today is a great day for Afghanistan. Not only will this plant stimulate the economy by providing jobs, it brings prosperity to the region and the country," said Ahmad Zia Masoud, the first vice-president of Afghanistan.

The \$4.8 million construction phase of the plant will employ hundreds of Afghans and nurture their technical expertise. Once the plant is operational, it will employ roughly 60 Afghans, not including the secondary jobs created from distributing, marketing and selling the water.

"This is the future of Afghanistan. As the country continues to rebuild after years of war, projects like this give a glimpse into the future. They show what is possible with hard work and determination," said Army Col. Larry D. Wyche, commander of the Joint Logistics Command and 10th Sustainment Brigade on Fort Drum, N.Y. Wyche is a native of Emporia, Va.

The plant -- which will produce Aria Water, a name derived from the ancient name for Afghanistan -- is the brainchild of the Ramin brothers. These three Afghan brothers were living in the U.S. before the terrorist attacks of 9-11. After the fall of the Taliban in late 2001, they returned to their homeland with a little bit of money and a big dream.

Initially they provided transport services to Coalition Forces working to help the Afghan National Army secure their country and over time they expanded into other areas.

When operating at full capacity, the plant will be able to produce nearly 325,000 bottles of water a day. Additionally, the plant will be able to produce much needed ice.

The equipment in the plant will be like few others in the world. This plant will make Afghanistan a regional leader in water bottling production, according to Wyche. The technology being used is currently used in a handful of plants around the world and cost more than \$3 million dollars, he added.

The water will meet or exceed bottling standards set by the International Bottled Water Association.

Construction of the 4,700-square-meter facility is expected to take four months, with the first bottle of water coming off the production line sometime in early 2007.



Photo by Army Pfc. Michael J. Nyeste

Afghanistan's First Vice President, Ahmad Zia Masoud, breaks ceremonial ground July 23 at the site of a new water bottling plant near Bagram Airfield. John Ramin, one of the plant's developers, looks on.



Photos by Army Sgt. Tim Sander

Command Sgt. Maj. James Redmore, left, demonstrates joint manipulation, one of the principles of Combat Hapkido, to a service member stationed at the Asadabad PRT's base in Afghanistan.

Combat Hapkido provides survival skills

By Army Sgt. Tim Sander

**345th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
FORWARD OPERATING BASE
SALERNO, Afghanistan**

-- After an intense firefight, you find yourself separated from your unit, out of ammunition and face to face with an enemy fighter. The enemy lunges toward you with a knife and you are suddenly faced with a split-second decision that could mean the difference between life and death.

For some service members in Afghanistan, the decision would be simple: side step, execute a quick strike to the side of the neck and take control of the enemy by using a variety of Combat Hapkido techniques.

Three Combat Hapkido experts brought their expertise to Afghanistan June 30 through July 12 to teach these valuable hand-to-hand combat skills.

Grand Master John Pellegrini, Master Robert L. Gray and Army Command Sgt. Maj. James Redmore visited five bases to share their techniques with U.S. forces,

Afghan Special Forces and members of the Polish military.

Pellegrini has been actively involved in martial arts for the past 40 years and is also the founder and president of the International Combat Hapkido Federation. Gray is a fourth-degree black belt, and Redmore, the Task Force Spartan command sergeant major, is a third-degree black belt.

Combat Hapkido is a reality based form of self-defense, developed specifically for close-quarter combat, said Pellegrini, a 58-year-old native of Florence, Italy.

"The techniques we teach can be extremely effective; our style gives the person options," said Pellegrini. "The person can use very mild, controlling techniques or escalate all the way to lethal techniques depending on the situation they find themselves," he added.

Pellegrini explained that this makes Combat Hapkido ideal for the military because it allows service members to operate within the boundaries of the

rules of engagement and the Geneva Convention while maintaining positive control of prisoners.

"Another difference that distinguishes Combat Hapkido from other forms of martial arts is that our system is based on scientific research in biomechanics, kinetics and other disciplines such as pressure points," said Pellegrini.

"This is achieved through an understanding of how the human body works. Once you understand the human body, your effectiveness in combat becomes superior because you have knowledge of where to protect yourself and where to strike," he said.

When given the opportunity to teach service members in Afghanistan, Pellegrini said he had no qualms.

"I have worked with the 3rd Brigade Combat Team of the 10th Mountain Division a few times already," said Pellegrini. "While at Fort Drum one time I found out they were getting deployed so

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I volunteered my services. I did it because I strongly support the troops and I believe in what we are doing in Afghanistan."

Pellegrini normally charges \$2,500 a day for his services but waived all fees for his 12-day trip to Afghanistan to

show his support for the war effort.

"It's one thing to say 'I support the troops,' but it's another thing to take action," said Pellegrini. "I believe everyone can do something to support the troops and this is what I can do," he added.

Of all the unique experi-

ences, Pellegrini said what stood out most was the "unbelievable friendship and camaraderie" he received from the service members he encountered.

"I was absolutely impressed by the level of professionalism and hospitality we were shown," said Pellegrini. "The highlight of the trip was to feel so accepted by the troops."

While training the Afghan Special Forces, Pellegrini had high praise for their role in securing lasting peace and freedom in Afghanistan.

"I believe the greatest gift one country can give to another is freedom," said Pellegrini. "But as we all know, freedom is not free. You can not just package freedom up and give it to someone. To have the opportunity to teach the Afghanistan Special Forces made me feel like we were empowering the Afghan people to protect themselves and their freedom. We gave them the tools and skills and they certainly have the hearts and will to use those tools."

Gray, who worked alongside Pellegrini throughout their

adventures in Afghanistan, said this trip is one that he will never forget.

"I never served in the military, so when the opportunity came up, I considered it an honor and a privilege to be able to join Grandmaster Pellegrini and teach American Soldiers," said Gray, who has been practicing Combat Hapkido for 12 years and holds a 4th degree black belt in the style of martial art.

Gray, a 54-year-old resident of upstate New York, has also worked with the 10th Mountain Division a few times while at Fort Drum. He said he jumped at the opportunity to instruct American Soldiers on foreign soil.

"I was with Grandmaster Pellegrini during his first seminar (at Fort Drum), and when the offer to go to Afghanistan came up, I threw my hat into the ring and volunteered," said Gray.

Before ending his seminars, Pellegrini spoke a few sincere words for all in attendance.

"Now you have the knowledge to defend yourselves; I truly hope you never have to use it."



Command Sgt. Maj. James Redmore, Task Force Spartan command sergeant major, demonstrates a form of joint manipulation to a member of the Polish military at Bagram Airfield.



Grandmaster John Pellegrini demonstrates the effectiveness of a strike to the side of the neck.



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**“It is difficult to say what is impossible, for the dream of yesterday
is the hope of today and the reality of tomorrow.”**

- Robert H. Goddard